

# SEVIER COUNTY TOURIST CORRIDOR ITS MASTER PLAN WORKSHOP MINUTES

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**MEETING DATE:** February 15, 2012

**MEETING TIME:** 1:00 PM – 4:00 AM

**MEETING LOCATION:** Pigeon Forge City Hall

**SUBJECT:** Sevier County Tourist Corridor ITS Master Plan – Workshop 1

**ATTENDEES:**

David Ball, City of Gatlinburg  
Logan Coykendall, City of Gatlinburg  
Larry Henderson, City of Gatlinburg  
Randall Brackins, City of Gatlinburg PD  
Buddy Parton, City of Gatlinburg  
Scott Marine, City of Pigeon Forge  
Roger Price, City of Pigeon Forge  
David Taylor, City of Pigeon Forge  
Tracy Baker, City of Sevierville  
Judi Forkner, City of Sevierville  
Bryon Fortner, City of Sevierville  
Jerry Hickman, City of Sevierville  
Lynn McClurg, City of Sevierville  
Don Myers, City of Sevierville  
Robbie Fox, Dollywood  
Gene Scherrer, Dollywood  
Don Brown, East TN Development District  
Corbin Davis, FHWA

Vicki Simms, Gatlinburg Chamber of Commerce  
Teresa Cantrell, Great Smoky Mtns National Park  
Kevin Fitzgerald, Great Smokey Mtns National Park  
Barbara Hatcher, Great Smoky Mtns National Park  
Nathan Benditz, Knoxville Regional TPO  
Mike Conger, Knoxville Regional TPO  
Jerry Huskey, Ober Gatlinburg  
John Matthews, Sevier County EMA  
Jonas Smelcer, Sevier County Hwy Department  
Perrin Anderson, Sevier County Mayor's Office  
Greg Patterson, Sevier County Mayor's Office  
Christy C. Haynes, TDOT  
Kwabena Aboagye, TDOT Multimodal Transportation  
John Reed, TDOT Multimodal Transportation  
John Benditz, Kimley-Horn and Associates  
Tom Fowler, Kimley-Horn and Associates  
Alan Childers, Cannon and Cannon  
Brian Haas, Cannon and Cannon

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**Introductions**

Mike Conger of the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) welcomed everyone and thanked the stakeholders for their participation in the development of an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Master Plan for the Sevier County Tourist Corridor. Mike noted that the ITS Master Plan is being developed as part of a larger overall Regional ITS Architecture Plan by the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) in cooperation with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The Regional ITS Architecture looks at how various technologies can be used to improve transportation operations in the Knoxville Region. Examples of these technologies include coordinated traffic signals, cameras for monitoring traffic conditions, and dynamic message signs to provide roadside information on traffic conditions. As part of the ITS Architecture project, a special emphasis is being placed on the unique and heavily traveled tourist corridor in Sevier County in order to identify specific ITS projects that can be implemented to improve traffic and public transit operations, provide traveler information, and ensure compatibility across the different jurisdictions.

Mike also noted that the project team assisting the Knoxville Regional TPO with this effort includes Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. and Cannon and Cannon, Inc.

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## **Presentation – Overview of ITS and the ITS Master Plan for the Sevier County Tourist Corridor Project**

Tom Fowler from Kimley-Horn presented an overview of ITS and the ITS Master Plan for the Sevier County Tourist Corridor. ITS covers a broad range of program areas, but for the ITS Master Plan the project will primarily focus on traffic management, traveler information, emergency management, and public transportation. Examples of the types of projects that could be considered include traffic signal coordination, emergency vehicle signal preemption, incident detection, traveler information on existing road conditions through roadside dynamic message signs or traveler information websites, transit vehicle signal priority, and information on next bus arrival. Tom noted that some of the benefits of ITS include:

- Increased efficiency for roadway and transit users;
- Enhanced incident management and special event management capabilities;
- Improved safety for travelers, public safety, and maintenance personnel; and
- Accurate and timely traveler information for all roadway users.

Tom also discussed the ITS Master Plan for the Sevier County Tourist Corridor Project in detail. The key goals of the project include the following:

- Identify transportation challenges along the Sevier County tourist corridor;
- Develop a set of ITS projects to address the transportation challenges along the corridor; and
- Meet the USDOT ITS Architecture conformity requirements to be eligible for federal funding of ITS projects.

## **Discussion of Transportation Challenges and Needs in the Corridor**

John Benditz and Tom Fowler led a discussion the transportation challenges and needs in the Tourist Corridor. Stakeholders noted the following challenges and needs:

### *Sevier County Tourist Corridor Challenges*

- I-40 traffic queues onto the freeway at the SR 66 Exit, especially on Fridays during peak tourist times.
- July and October are peak tourist periods that cause severe congestion on the Corridor throughout the week and weekend. Christmas time and the months surrounding July and October also have congestion issues throughout the week.
- Tourists leaving the area on Sundays can create severe congestion throughout the year.
- Veterans Boulevard is underutilized. Potential solutions noted by stakeholders include:
  - Lack of signage to let people know Veterans Boulevard can act as a bypass; and
  - Veterans Boulevard connects to a 4-lane road in Sevierville but only to a 2-lane road in Pigeon Forge.
- Everyone accesses the corridor at the same point using SR 66.
- There are three cities on the corridor and each has a different traffic pattern.
- During mid-June through mid-August, the police will manually control traffic signals during peak traffic periods. This normally occurs on a daily basis.
- The corridor sometimes experiences unanticipated peak demands which severely impact operations. For example, severe storms may require that Dollywood closes unexpectedly, which sends a large amount of traffic onto the corridor.
- Incidents with extended closures on the corridor severely impact traffic. Additional CCTV cameras could help to get emergency vehicles to the scene of incidents faster, which would expedite clearance of the incidents.
- Sevierville and Pigeon Forge signals have not been able to communicate due to line of sight issues.

### *Sevier County Tourist Corridor Needs*

- Need improved signal coordination along the corridor.
- Need to provide congestion alerts to travelers entering and leaving the area.

- Need to add emergency vehicle signal pre-emption in Pigeon Forge, although some stakeholders noted a concern about the impact of signal pre-emption during severe congestion.
- Need to provide advanced traveler information so that travelers will know the conditions on the routes and their alternatives in order to make the best choices.

### **Discussion of Possible ITS Solutions for the Corridor**

John Benditz led a discussion regarding some potential ITS solutions for stakeholders to consider implementing on the Corridor. Kimley-Horn will expand on these solutions based on the challenges and needs discussed and present more specific project ideas, including associated costs, at the next stakeholder workshop which will be held in April.

The two primary solutions that John discussed were Advanced Transportation Management Systems and Advanced Traveler Information Systems. Advanced Transportation Management Systems can include coordinated traffic signal control, real-time signal monitoring, intersection video monitoring, emergency vehicle preemption, and transit vehicle priority. Advanced Transportation Traveler Information Systems can include the use of dynamic message signs, highway advisory radio, websites, and telephone services (including the 511 traveler information service.)

### **Concluding Comments and Next Steps**

Based on the discussion in the Workshop, the project consultant team will develop a list of recommended projects including costs and expected benefits. These projects will be presented at the next workshop which will be held in April 2012. A date and location will be determined later and invitations will be sent to all stakeholders in attendance.

Mike Conger from the Knoxville Regional TPO thanked everyone for their participation and attendance in the workshop.